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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001118

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: RESPONSE CABLE: DEMARCHE TO GOSS ON SPLM PARTY
LEADERSHIP STRATEGY SESSION IN WASHINGTON, DC

REF: STATE 77399

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Response - Action Request One

11. (C) CG Juba spoke with SPLM SG Pagan Amum regarding the proposed SPLM party leadership strategy session in Washington the week of August 18. Amum plans to present two proposals to SPLM Chairman Kiir and told us he should have a decision by the week of July 27. The first proposal would be for Kiir himself to lead a delegation composed of SG Amum, D/SG Anne Itto, D/SG Yasir Arman, and "select others" as determined by Kiir. With Kiir present, the delegation would be open to discussions of elections strategy. The second proposal would be a delegation headed by SG Amum and accompanied by Arman, Itto, and the Elections Committee (expected to be selected this weekend by the Political Bureau, although the ICC issue and discussions of plans for the SPLM Darfur Task Force will likely eclipse these discussions). According to Amum, this delegation would be authorized to have technical level discussions and would bring recommendations back to Kiir for endorsement and discussion with the Political Bureau.

(Comment: We think it is unlikely that Kiir will travel to Washington, and although Amum provided a somewhat bureaucratic response in terms of his authority only to discuss "technical issues," he will probably be willing to engage in questions of SPLM strategy as well. However, it is important to note that the SPLM has not yet decided on its strategy, as much of this depends on its relationship with the NCP and managing the internal divisions with the SPLM party itself. The SPLM also sees value in keeping the NCP guessing about what its real intentions are for the 2009 elections and could well wind up supporting rather than opposing Al-Bashir. The more tangibly empowered the SPLM feels it is by the United States, the more likely it is to challenge the NCP. The ICC indictment imbroglio and a renewed focus on Darfur will likely slow down elections planning and further delay decision-making by the SPLM on elections with regard to candidates. End note.)

Response - Action Request Two

12. (C) Post believes it is unlikely that the NCP will propose another candidate for president than Bashir. Although there is an outside chance that the ICC indictment could cause a "palace coup" within the NCP, it is hard to imagine that

President Bashir, after 19 years as an un-elected head of state, will not seek the full legitimacy of a national election if indeed elections go forward. However, the ICC indictment against Bashir could change the configuration of the leadership within the senior ranks of the party as Bashir seeks to further sideline those who are a threat to him such as current VP Ali Osman Taha. Bashir's support is strongest in the military, so a coup from within the military appears unlikely, although the SAF is disgruntled as a result of perceived slights by other security organs (such as NISS) in the wake of the JEM Omdurman attack. However, the NCP party can also be expected to support Bashir, perhaps even more so because of the ICC indictment. The NCP is highly organized, strategic, and well funded and will likely have internal debates about Bashir's viability following the indictment (and anticipated arrest warrant) but Bashir could use the warrants to rally further support.

13. (C) If Bashir for some reason is not able - or in a surprise move decides not to run for president - there will certainly be a power struggle between factions supporting Ali Osman Taha and Nafie Ali Nafie, though Taha is likely to win in such a struggle. Although Nafie currently has greater support from President Bashir (largely in an effort to sideline Taha) there is a large group of party moderates who would likely stand firmly behind Taha. (Note: If a warrant is issued for Bashir's arrest, this could complicate elections planning as the NCP deliberates on how this factor may affect the NCP's and Bashir's election prospects. Certainly the ICC process has further slowed election planning already, as the regime is now focusing on its response to the indictment to the exclusion of all other issues. It is hard to imagine the NCP moving forward on an election commission in the near term under these circumstances. End note.) There are many other powerful

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figures within the regime, although they owe their positions and influence to Bashir. These include his closest advisors/confidants Awad al Gaz (Minister of Finance), Bakri Saleh (Minister of the Presidency), and Abdul Rahim Hussein (Minister of Defense) but Bashir has kept them out of the upper tier of NCP party politics. Likewise, NCP party leaders such as Taha and Nafie have no military credentials. Thus there is no consensus choice on a successor to Bashir, by design.

14. (C) With regard to SPLM election planning, post believes it is still highly unlikely that Salva Kiir will run for the national presidency, regardless of whether the US encourages him to do so. (Note: Post continues to believe the US should not encourage Kiir to run for national office, as he has his hands full keeping the South and the SPLM together. Despite press reports in the last few days that Kiir might run for national president - based on comments from Yasir Arman indicating he would urge Kiir to run - we believe it is unlikely Kiir will do so. Arman, a northerner, has different objectives for the SPLM than do most southerners. Arman would like the SPLM to maintain a national agenda and to avoid the referendum on self-determination, while most southerners want separation. End note.) Kiir's priority has always been for the South and he and his advisors have told us many times that he is not comfortable in Khartoum. Kiir would certainly run for president of the GOSS and his priority will be to ensure stability within the SPLM and within the GOSS, and to ensure ethnic harmony. Although current GOSS VP Riek Machar might enjoy the profile of a run for the national presidency, despite his double-dealing with Khartoum, Machar's interests have never been in the North - historically he has always been for an independent South and his vision is entirely southern-oriented. Thus Machar might compete against Kiir for the GOSS presidency, unless Kiir strikes a deal with him to run together on a joint "unity" ticket in the South. The idea of Machar as President of the GOSS could well split the SPLM.

15. (C) Other possible SPLM candidates to run for the national presidency are Malik Agar, Deng Alor, Pagan Amum, or Yasir Arman. Of the four, Malik Agar is possibly the most charismatic and could well be the best manager and leader given his accomplishments in Blue Nile as governor, however he does not have a large geographic/ethnic constituency. Deng Alor is respected in the North and his name is well known due to his being the grandson of the Ngok Dinka paramount chief, but is currently criticized for having narrow interests in Abyei. Pagan Amum has a significant Shilluk tribal constituency and is associated closely with John Garang, but has made perhaps one too many inflammatory and ill-considered remarks to be viewed as a national statesman. Yasir Arman, despite his (controversial) profile in the press and his widely-regarded intellect, does not have a constituency; he comes from the same Ja'alyn tribe as President Bashir and is a distant relative of the president, but has no political following in Nile River State nor in Gezira where he grew up. The choice is certainly not clear, but Deng Alor could possibly be the strongest candidate given his large Dinka ethnic constituency, his "regal" credentials within his tribe, and his current national profile as Foreign Minister. But the fact that he is not a Muslim is a handicap. Malik Agar (who is a Muslim) is also a strong candidate but the lack of a sizable constituency remains an obstacle. There is also the possibility of the SPLM supporting a non-SPLMer, such as Umma reformer Mubarak al-Fadel, as a "sacrificial lamb" for the Presidency. In short, there are no good alternatives to the current lineup of Al-Bashir as President and Kiir as First Vice President and President of the GOSS. There are other possibilities but they all have serious drawbacks.

Response - Action Request Three

16. (C) The UN, the EU, and several western donors have planned significant elections assistance, some of which was announced at the Donor Consortium in Oslo. However, most donors are waiting for the electoral commission to be announced and Sudanese elections planning to begin in earnest before committing to specific programs. Post will provide additional detail on donor electoral planning septel.
FERNANDEZ